

## Little Christmas Lumberjack by MusictoMii

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**Summary:**

When Ben drags Richie to Hanlon's farm to pick out a Christmas tree, Richie isn't expecting to meet the love of his life. But he does.

## **Little Christmas Lumberjack**

### **Author's Note:**

Here's a little self-indulgent Christmas fluff for you all! I couldn't get over the idea of Eddie being a strong lumberjack-esque, axe wielding little bean, and Richie absolutely drooling over him.

Enjoy!

"I don't know how I let you talk me into this, Benjamin. Why the fuck didn't you just bring your wife and kids?"

Richie huffed and crossed his arms, glaring out the window as Ben steered his car onto a long dirt road that lead to a cozy looking farm. The lane leading up to it was lined on both sides by long strands of white lights, and there was a thin layer of snow blanketing the grounds, stretching for miles on either side. It looked happy and inviting, and Richie hated it on sight.

"Because you know Bev only cares about the decorating and the kids don't even know we're getting the tree yet. Plus, you've been an absolute grinch since Sandy dumped you and it's time you buckle up and join everyone else in the holiday spirit."

Richie's face became pinched at the mention of his ex-girlfriend. They had broken up the month previous when it became clear that Richie had no intention of ever proposing, even after two years of practically living in each other's pockets. If Richie were being totally honest, he would have to admit that he wasn't even all that upset about the breakup itself. What had started as a whirlwind romance had quickly fizzled out to a subtle thrum of comfort. Sandy had been comfortable, but any passion or actual desire Richie may have felt for her in the beginning, was gone by the end of six months. The breakup had been inevitable, Richie was just sour that it had happened right before the holidays and now he had no one to celebrate with.

He sent a halfhearted glare at Ben as he pulled his car into a parking space and turned off the ignition. His friend sent a kind, gentle smile

his way, causing Richie to narrow his eyes.

“C’mon, Rich. We’re worried about you. We just want you to be happy again.”

Richie sighed and closed his eyes for a brief moment. When he opened them, Ben was still watching him, eyes full of worry and hope and love, and Richie’s resolve shattered upon impact.

“Alright, alright. No need to gut me with those puppy dog eyes, Handsome, let’s go.” He heaved himself out of the car, then turned to point a stern finger in Ben’s direction, trying in vain to stifle the smile growing on his lips. “But you’re buying me a hot chocolate.”

Ben beamed at him and Richie grasped at his heart as if he’d been shot. “Jesus, you are 40 fucking years old, put that 1,000-watt smile away before everyone on this goddamn farm falls in love with you. I don’t think Bev would appreciate having to come up here to fight everyone to the death for your honor.”

Ben laughed and rounded the car, throwing a casual arm around Richie’s shoulders and tugging him close. “Nah, she’d show up and then *I’d* be the one fighting to the death for *her* honor.” He reached up and tugged Richie’s beanie down over his eyes, knocking his glasses askew. Richie let out a loud sound of protest and swatted Ben’s hand away, but couldn’t suppress his laugh as he adjusted his hat and pushed his frames back into place.

“Disgusting.”

He let Ben tug him in the direction of a large barn, rustic sign on the front declaring it a part of **Hanlon’s Farm**. There weren’t many people around, afternoon just starting to darken into dusk, and the atmosphere was warm and cozy. Richie found himself unwittingly starting to relax, tension seeping from his shoulders and general mood improving until he was able to glance over at Ben with a genuine grin. The other man smiled at him brightly then moved behind him, clasping both hands onto his shoulders, and pushing him into the barn before him.

Inside, the barn was warm and inviting. Christmas lights had been

strung from nearly every surface and the sweet smell of baked goods lingered in the air. Richie let out a soft “oh” of surprise upon taking everything in, and Ben gave his shoulders a gentle squeeze before leading him over to a small wooden counter where a tall, smiling man was watching them kindly.

“Hi there!” The man’s smile was bright, white teeth appearing even brighter in contrast with his dark skin. “I’m Mike. What can I do for you folks today?”

Ben smiled back. “Nice to meet you, Mike. I’m Ben, this is Richie,” he gestured to the man in question who raised a hand in greeting. “We’re surprising my kids with a tree this year. Think we could have a look around?”

Mike grinned. “Absolutely! I’ve gotta man the counter today but if you hang around for a few minutes, Eddie should be finishing up with his current customer and he’ll be able to help you out.” He gestured around the barn. “Feel free to have a look around while you wait. I can get you guys a drink if you’d like?”

Ben ordered them two hot chocolates while Richie started wandering around the barn, admiring all of the homemade baked goods and jams, bad mood from before basically forgotten. Hanging out with Ben usually made him feel better and he fondly cursed the Hanscom-Marsh family for knowing all his weaknesses. A nudge to his shoulder and the sweet smell of chocolate alerted him of Ben’s presence, and he had just reached out to grab the paper cup being offered to him when the barn door was pushed open and an angel walked inside.

Richie froze, eyes widening and mouth falling slightly open, with his cup lifted halfway to his mouth. The man who entered was small, at least a good handful of inches shorter than Richie’s own 6’1”, and he was slim under his well fitted wool coat. He was wearing tan LLBean boots and a crimson bobble hat, and his face was dimpled with the force of his smile. Richie’s stomach swooped when he noticed the axe flung casually over his shoulder.

“... and Mike over here would be more than happy to check you out once you’re done looking around.” The man rounded the counter and clapped a hand onto Mike’s shoulder, smile never leaving his face. He

turned to the man beside him. “They picked out a good one, Mikey. Maybe even the best one in the lot.” He sent a friendly wink to the two kids standing behind their parents causing them the burst into giggles.

“*God*. Please tell me that’s Eddie,” Richie breathed out quietly, eyes never leaving the shorter man. Ben looked at him in surprise then glanced at the man next to Mike. A sly smile crept onto his face and his eyes were gleeful when he caught Richie’s attention. Richie immediately turned red and shoved at Ben’s shoulder, mumbling “*shut up*” under his breath when the blond started laughing.

The sound of Ben’s laughter drew the attention of the new man behind the counter. His eyes snapped over to where they were standing and Richie’s breath caught in his throat when his blue eyes made contact with the man’s warm, brown ones. He watched entranced as the man’s eyes flicked quickly down his body, and the smile that grew on his face set the taller man’s nerves on fire.

Richie watched as Mike leaned down to speak into Eddie’s ear, who’s eyebrows furrowed slightly and lips turned ever so slightly downward as he glanced quickly between Richie and Ben. In the next breath his smile returned, looking slightly more pinched than before, and moved from behind the counter to approach the pair. Richie gasped, breath becoming shallow as Ben snickered beside him. The man came to a stop directly in front of them.

“Hey! I’m Eddie. Heard you’re looking for a tree to surprise your kids with?” He stuck out his hand for a shake and Ben grabbed it with a kind smile.

“Yeah! I’m Ben. I’ve got twins and we figured we’d reward them for doing so well in school so far this year. They’re in second grade.”

Eddie hummed in acknowledgement and turned to offer his hand to Richie, looking up at him through his eyelashes. “And you are?”

“Uhhh...” Richie couldn’t think, eyes roaming quickly over Eddie’s face. He snapped out of it with an embarrassed yelp as Ben elbowed him in the side. He blushed and reached out to take Eddie’s hand, heart skipping a beat at the contact. Eddie’s hand was warm and

calloused, and Richie's engulfed it almost completely. "Richie. I'm Richie."

Eddie smiled at him, shaking his hand for a beat longer than normal, then pulled away with a subtle shake of his head. He looked between the two taller men with an indecipherable look and nodded toward the door. "Let's go find your kids a Christmas tree."

Richie chugged his hot chocolate (only burning his tongue a *little* bit) and tossed his cup in a trash can as he rushed to follow Eddie out the barn door. Ben followed at a more sedate pace, stifling his laughter behind a hand. He made eye contact with Mike as he followed the other two men out the door and sent him a wink and an eyebrow wiggle as he gestured to Richie and Eddie. He didn't notice Mike's look of confusion.

Eddie led them down a path to the left of the barn toward a section of evergreens that appeared slightly fuller than the rest. Richie walked behind him, still slightly dazed by the shorter man's looks, and watched the way his ass flexed in his jeans as he moved, ignoring any attempt from Ben to get his attention. Richie's face burned when Eddie turned and he was suddenly staring at his crotch instead, gaze vaulting up to his face in an effort to hide where he had just been looking. The light blush that coated Eddie's cheeks told him he wasn't quite successful.

Clearing his throat, Eddie gestured behind him toward the trees and asked, "so what size were you guys thinking? I probably should have asked before I just led you over to the big ones, but I had a hunch you were looking to go all out."

"Well, you weren't wrong!" Ben started wandering through the trees, running his hands gently over the boughs. "We've got high ceilings so we can do 8 feet at least." He paused and glanced over to where Richie was still hovering close to Eddie and gave him a teasing smirk. "I'm gonna go look down this way. Rich, why don't you and Eddie start in the other corner. We'll meet in the middle?"

Richie's eyes widened, but before he could open his mouth to tell Ben to absolutely *not* leave him alone with the shorter man who may possibly be the love of his life, he was being sent a wink and Ben was

running off in the other direction. Richie cursed under his breath, sending a glare to the spot his friend had disappeared from, then turned to Eddie who was looking at him in poorly disguised shock.

“Uh. Okay. That was weird. Is he always like that?”

Richie huffed. “Ben is the sweetest person in the entire world, but he can be such a little shit when he wants to be.”

The corner of Eddie’s mouth twitched upwards into the ghost of a smile before he turned and started leading Richie through the trees in the opposite direction of Ben. “Sounds like you guys care about each other a lot.”

Richie fell in beside him, tucking his hands into his coat pockets and noting, with some curiosity, that Eddie was giving off a faint air of disappointment. Tucking that observation to the side, Richie began looking around in earnest, sparkles from dozens of Christmas lights reflecting off of his glasses. “Ben is my best friend in the entire fucking world. Has been since we were 13 years old and I rescued him from being carved up by our hometown bully. It’s pretty hard to go through as much shit together as we did and make it to almost 30 years of friendship without learning to love each other at least a little bit.”

He didn’t notice the soft, sad look Eddie sent his way, because just as he finished speaking, he looked to his right and exclaimed, “*that’s it!*” Unthinkingly, he grabbed Eddie’s hand in his own and yanked him over to a tall spruce tree a few yards away. The branches were long and full, and the needles were a uniform dark green color. A light dusting of snow gave it an ethereal glow where the icy crystals were shining in the low light.

Richie admired his find for a moment, then turned to yell for Ben over his shoulder, never letting go of Eddie’s hand.

“Right here,” Ben spoke from directly behind them, causing Richie to shriek and drop Eddie’s hand as if he’d been burned. He whipped around just in time to see Ben shoving his phone in his pocket, exaggeratedly innocent smile on his face. Richie took a step forward and jabbed a finger into Ben’s chest, glaring heatedly. “You sneaky

little fuck, what were you doing with your phone?”

Ben batted his finger away with an easy laugh. “You know for a fact that Bev would kill me I didn’t docu-”

Ben was cut off by a pointed cough from a red faced Eddie. For some reason, the smaller man looked mortified, as if he had been caught doing something he shouldn’t have. “Uh... so is this one you guys want?”

Ben took a step around Richie too look appraisingly at the tree in question. He was quiet for a moment, then looked back at Richie with a beaming smile. “It’s perfect, Rich. The kids are gonna love it.”

Richie rubbed the back of his neck bashfully. “Yeah, well. I’m more than just a pretty face, you know. I do have a good eye for *some* things.”

Ben laughed. “Those Hawaiian style dad shirts you’ve worn your whole life would beg to differ, man.”

Richie’s retort was cut off by the sound of a loud “*whack*” from the direction of Ben’s tree. When he glanced over, his mouth went instantly dry.

Eddie had removed his wool coat, leaving him in a soft looking flannel button up that matched the crimson color of his hat. He was crouched down, jeans pulled taut over the curve of his ass, and was gently coaxing his axe back out of the trunk of the tree. Richie watched mesmerised, mouth hanging slightly open, as Eddie freed the axe and lifted it to swing again, muscles moving sinfully beneath his slim fitting shirt.

“So how long have you two been together?”

Eddie’s question jerked Richie out of his stupor as if he’d been dumped with icy water. “What?”

The shorter man paused, sending a questioning glance at the two over his shoulder. “How long have you guys been dating? You said you’ve been friends for almost 30 years but didn’t mention when it went from friendship to something more.”

Richie's brows furrowed in confusion as he turned to blink at Ben dumbly. Ben looked like he was trying really hard not to laugh.

"We're not... Ben and I aren't... *What?* "

Eddie watched with a confused expression of his own as Ben succumbed to his laughter and reached forward to grasp onto Richie's shoulder to keep himself upright. When his breath returned to normal, he looked up and noticed that Eddie's expression had shifted into annoyance and raised his hands placatingly. "Richie and I aren't together, Eddie. I am happily married to the most beautiful woman on the planet, and while I'm flattered that you'd think he and I would make a good pair, I can assure you it's never going to happen."

Eddie blinked in surprise, brows raising. "Oh! I'm sorry! I shouldn't have assumed. You guys just seem so close..." his face was dark red and he quickly turned back, barely hiding a pleased smile, to continue chopping down the tree.

Richie was at a loss for words. He stared wide eyed at Eddie's tense shoulders as they shifted with each blow of the axe, trying to make sense of what just happened.

Before he had come up with anything to say, Eddie was warning them to step back and calling out a quick, "timber!" The tree they had chosen toppled to the ground with a resounding crash, then everything was still. Eddie shifted from foot to foot nervously, sending a shy glance in Richie's direction from beneath his eyelashes before excusing himself to go get a sled to haul the tree with. As soon as he was out of sight, Richie rounded on Ben.

"Please tell me you thought he looked as into me as I did. I wasn't imagining those longing looks, was I?"

Ben let out a bright burst of laughter. "Richie, that man has been making bedroom eyes at you all night. He's definitely into you."

Richie grinned, feeling an excited buzz begin to build in the pit of his stomach.

A moment later Eddie returned, pulling a large wooden sled behind

him, looking decidedly happier than he had when they had initially set out on their search. "If one of you could help me lift the top of the tree, the other can slide the sled right underneath it and we'll be good to go!"

Ben immediately moved to help Eddie with the heavy lifting, leaving Richie to handle the sled. Within minutes the tree was loaded up and Eddie was guiding them back toward the barn, his coat folded over Richie's arm as the taller man trailed behind him, watching the way his shoulders moved as he pulled the heavy sled. When they arrived, Eddie handed Ben a ticket he had pulled from the depths of the tree's branches.

"Head on in and give this to Mike. He'll check you out. I can help Richie load the tree on your car while you do that if you'd like?"

Ben nodded and gave Richie a very obvious wink that had both men blushing. He disappeared into the barn, leaving Richie and Eddie to stand together awkwardly for a long moment.

"Come on. Ben's car is over here." Richie led Eddie across the parking lot in silence, air between them thick with tension. He chanced a sideways glance at the shorter man and saw him worrying his bottom lip between his teeth.

"You'll give yourself chapped lips if you keep that up, Eds."

"Don't call me Eds." The smaller man winced slightly at his harsh retort, but held firm as he glared at the nickname. Richie grinned.

They were just securing the last rope to the car when a cheery voice broke their concentration.

"Mistletoe!"

Richie and Eddie both looked up in surprise. Ben was standing directly behind them, arm outstretched to hover directly in the space above their heads. In his hand was a small sprig of mistletoe. Mike was peeking slyly out the barn door in the background, not even trying to hide a giant smile. Richie felt his face burn, stomach exploding into nervous butterflies as he gaped at his friend

incredulously. A quick sideways glance showed him that Eddie was just as red, but instead of looking angry, was chewing on his lip again as if he was suddenly shy.

In an effort to not get his hopes up, he turned his attention back to Ben who was still standing behind them, proudly smirking to himself. He narrowed his eyes.

“What the hell, man? Not cool. Just because you know *I* like dudes, doesn’t mean you can assume every guy I make eyes at does to. Eddie might not even be gay, you can’t just fo-”

He was cut off by a warm hand on his cheek gently turning his face to the side, and the sudden, quick pressure of a pair of chapped lips against his own. It didn’t last long, just a chaste peck, but it was enough to steal all the air from Richie’s lungs and make his brain short circuit.

“Wha-?” He looked down at Eddie in wonder, taking note of the dusting of pink across his freckled nose and the way he wouldn’t quite meet Richie’s eye. There was a pleased, shy little smile tugging at his lips.

“I am. Gay, I mean.” He looked up through his eyelashes and Richie’s heart skipped a beat.

“Oh.” Richie’s brain felt like mush. He was vaguely aware that Ben was still holding the mistletoe above their heads, his free hand now holding his phone up in their direction, clearly filming, but Richie couldn’t bring himself to care, too busy trying to count the barely there shadow of individual hairs on Eddie’s upper lip.

“Yeah, *oh* .” Eddie chuckled and Richie thought it was the most beautiful sound he’d ever heard. “And...” He bit his lip again, debating his words carefully. “If you wanted... I’d very much like to kiss you again.”

Richie’s heart soared as he took in a sharp intake of air. He stared at Eddie, wide eyes searching his face, looking desperately for any hint that he might be joking. Upon finding none, he let a blinding smile take over his face and nodded with a breathy laugh.

“I would like nothing more, my little Christmas lumberjack.”

Eddie wrinkled his nose at the nickname, but simultaneously reached up to grab the back of Richie’s neck, pulling him down while he rose onto his tiptoes. He paused just before their lips connected again.

“Don’t fucking call me that.”

Richie burst into laughter, the sound muffled by Eddie’s mouth as the shorter man leaned up the last half inch and pressed their lips together. Richie melted into the kiss, arms winding around Eddie’s waist and tugging him close. Eddie’s free hand came up to twist into the front of Richie’s coat as he let out a little sigh of contentment.

The sound of cheering and wolf whistles pulled them apart moments later, but they didn’t go far, arms remaining around each other as they turned to the delighted sounds of Ben and Mike, unable to keep happy smiles off of their faces as they glared at their respective friends. Richie raised one arm to give Ben and the camera the middle finger, then turned his attention back to Eddie, bringing his hand to his face so he could rub his thumb gently over his cheekbone, bringing Eddie’s gaze back to him.

“Hi.” Eddie’s face split into a wide grin.

“Hi!”

“I’m sorry if this is too forward, but can I take you out to dinner sometime? Or coffee?”

Eddie’s eyes crinkled in the corners as his smile grew impossibly wider. “Yeah, I’d like that.” Richie grinned back at him, cheeks beginning to hurt from the intensity.

“Can I kiss you again?”

Eddie laughed, a bright burst of sound that flowed through Richie’s brain like music. “I’d be offended if you didn’t.”

The sound of Ben and Mike’s cheering faded into the background as Richie leaned down and brought their lips back together, terrible mood from the beginning of the night completely forgotten.

As they stood, completely wrapped around each other, surrounded by twinkling lights and Christmas spirit, Richie let himself smile into the kiss, head full of cheer and dreaming of a happy, Eddie filled future.

**Author's Note:**

Let me know what you think!